



## **NJDOE News**

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### **1999 SAT Scores Rise From Last Year Surpassing National Trends (Embargoed until 12:00 Noon Tuesday August 31, 1999)**

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today announced that average SAT scores of New Jersey's high school students have risen from 1998. The mean score on the verbal portion of the test rose one point to 498 and the mean score on the math portion of the test rose two points to 510. Nationally, the mean score in math decreased by one point and the mean score on the verbal portion stayed the same. New Jersey also had the highest participation rate in the nation in 1999 with 80% of graduates taking the SAT--the same participation rate as Connecticut.

During the six years of the Whitman administration the mean score on the verbal portion of the tests has risen by four points from 494 to 498. The mean math score has risen during the last six years from 500 to 510.

"Our continued gains on the SAT exam are most impressive," said Governor Whitman. "This year's results indicate to me that we are offering our students a high quality education in New Jersey and that we also have an exceptionally high quality student population."

"I am certainly pleased at this year's results on the SAT exam," said Hespe. "Particularly impressive are our gains on the math section of the test. It is, however important to remember that we also place a very high level of importance on our state assessments--the ESPA, the GEPA, and the HSPT. The results of the ESPA and GEPA will be released in September.

"These tests are linked to our rigorous academic standards which measure what students know and are able to do at the fourth, eighth and eleventh grade levels. We must remember that although the results of the SATs are impressive, this exam is not linked to New Jersey's standards."

"SAT results are one important indication of a student's readiness for higher education. Clearly the latest results speak for themselves.

"It is important to note that although some states have higher overall scores than we do here in New Jersey, this may be a function of the high percentage of our student population that takes the tests. In New Jersey, many more students of all levels of abilities take the SATs," the Commissioner said.

In addition, New Jersey continued its strong showing on advanced placement tests. Advanced placement courses allow high school students to take college-level courses and to accumulate college credits while attending high school. In 1999, 23,866 New Jersey students took advanced placement tests, an 11.4% increase from last year. Those students took 40,828 exams, a 14.1% increase from last year. In addition, 28,720 students achieved the grades of 3 or higher, which are required by most colleges for receiving college credit, an increase of 13.7% from last year. Across New Jersey, 87.4 percent of all high schools offer at least one advanced placement course - the highest percentage in the nation.